DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 938 UD 025 917

AUTHOR Miles, Matthew B.
TITLE Improving the Urban High School: Some Preliminary News from 5 Cases.
INSTITUTION Center for Policy Research, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE 19 Apr 86
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Change Strategies; Coping; *Educational Improvement; *High Schools; Improvement Programs; *Organizational Change; *Program Implementation; Site Analysis; *Urban Education

ABSTRACT

Preliminary lessons emerging from five case studies contained in a larger study on improving urban high schools are explored in this report. An eclectic approach was taken to describe the contextual influences in and around the school improvement programs. Potential variables were selected from previous research to frame the investigation and site visits were made to each of the five schools. Findings are presented in the following categories: (1) the improvement programs; (2) reasons for the choice of program; (3) problems encountered; (4) managing and coping strategies; (5) managing/coping consequences; and (6) the results of implementation. The cross-site analysis yielded a list of hints to advise those trying to improve urban high schools. The themes suggested by the findings are the following: (1) the process is not so well defined since it must encompass local context and history; (2) the process requires active, coherent management with a strong capacity-building emphasis; (3) people within the school must be empowered and the school's power within the district must increase; (4) active, change-oriented principals are positive influences in the process; and (5) urban high schools can be improved with an effective schools and/or effective teaching approach. (VM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

12-2-87

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Matthew Miles
Center for Policy Research
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
[X] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

April, 1986

ED288938

IMPROVING THE URBAN HIGH SCHOOL: SOME PRELIMINARY NEWS FROM 5 CASES[1]

Matthew B. Miles
Center for Policy Research

More and more, the wave of school improvement that draws from "effective schools" and "effective teaching" findings is lapping at the shores of the American high school. There have been thoughtful summaries of what a good high school should look like, in and out of classrooms (Doyle, 1985; Corcoran, 1985); and according to various surveys, anywhere from 800 to nearly 4,000 high schools (Miles & Kaufman, 1985; Purkey et al, in press) are carrying out some serious improvement program. But effective schools and effective teaching programs were largely developed in elementary schools, and we do not really know how relevant they are to improving high schools (Farrar, Neufeld & Miles, 1983). We lack good case studies, not of "effective" high schools, but of <u>improving</u> high schools.

This report is drawn from a larger study, "Improving the Urban High School: Guidelines for Implementation"[2], launched because we reasoned that a careful look at implementation processes in high school improvement efforts could pay useful dividends: we could begin to understand "how to get there". We

---

[1] Read at Symposium on Improving the Urban High School: Theory Into Practice. American Educational Research Association meeting, San Francisco, April 19,. 1986

[2] My colleagues are Karen Seashore Louis and Anthony Cipollone (University of Massachusetts at Boston), Eleanor Farrar (Abt Associates), and Sheila Rosenblum (independent research consultant, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.)

UD025917

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

deliberately chose urban high schools, which are typically seen as functioning poorly, and as intractable to change efforts. The project includes a national survey of 248 urban high schools (reported in this symposium by Louis), and five case studies; both are designed to lead to a practical set of "implementation guidelines" -- and eventually, we hope, to useful training materials.

This report explores some of the preliminary lessons about urban high school improvement that seem visible at this point in the five case studies, (which are still under way as I write). It begins with a brief overview of our conceptual approach, then summarizes our data collection and analysis methods, and reviews the nature and timing of improvement efforts in each of the 5 sites. The substantive findings follow: why the improvement programs were chosen; problems encountered; strategies followed to manage and cope with the problems; some general results noted; and some final reflections and nascent advice.

Our Conceptual Approach

We took a rather eclectic approach to what we were looking for. Fig. 1 shows a simplified block diagram of the conceptual scheme for the study.

FIG. 1 ABOUT HERE

Essentially, we wanted to describe the contextual influences in and around the school, the improvement program itself, the assistance provided, the actual events and processes during implementation, the problems and barriers encountered, and how they were dealt with. Naturally, we wanted to assess the overall quality of implementation, and the outcomes achieved. We developed a set of 9 descriptive research questions (for example, "What was the basic

chronology of events, during the periods of initiation/planning, and of implementation? What roles did key actors and groups play?") And we generated five explanatory research questions, aimed at probing the arrows in the diagram (for example, "What influences or causes management/coping strategies? These may include problems encountered, assistance provided, and the existing pre-conditions in the school.")

Within each of the blocks, we named a series of specific variables (for example, in the outcomes block, we listed interim outcomes such as shared diagnosis, ownership of program and increased collaboration; longer-term "adult" outcomes such as teacher skill and methods mastery, image of the school in the community, and planning/problem-solving capacity; and student outcomes such as achievement, behavior, retention, employment and further education.) These were essentially "start lists" of variables drawn from our own prior work (e.g., Farrar, Miles & Neufeld, 1983; Powell, Farrar & Cohen, 1985; Huberman & Miles, 1984; Louis, Rosenblum & Molitor, 1981) and that of others (e.g., Berman & Gjelten, 1984; Corcoran, 1985; Doyle, 1985; Clark et al, 1984; Firestone, Herriott & Wilson, 1983; Rutherford, Hord et al, 1985). We did not try for a tight or well-defined conceptual framework, but wanted to be as mindful as possible of what might be important in our sites.

Data Collection and Analysis Methods

We planned to spend 7 to 9 days at each of our research sites (see below), spread over the 1985-86 school year. Though early visits concentrated more on understanding the history and chronology of the program, and later visits focused more on problems, coping strategies and outcomes, each researcher was free to collect data in whatever sequence and tempo seemed

appropriate. There were no standardized interview or observation guides, but the researcher was fully aware that the data would be entered iteratively into a pre-existing case study outline, built around the research questions. The outline included a series of matrix displays generated according to the methods proposed by Miles & Huberman (1984).

Site visits, carried out alone (or, in two sites, by partners) normally included interviews with administrators (both school-level and central office), teachers, counselors, and students; observations of meetings and classrooms; and collection of a wide range of program-related documents from attendance and achievement records to student newspaper articles, program plans, and assorted memoes. We also typically spoke with salient external representatives (foundation, state department and business people, for example).

Upon returning from the site, the researcher worked directly from field notes, writing text under the headings of the outline, and entering data in the matrix displays. The case study was thus a gradually-evolving one, proceeding through iterations after each successive visit.

The preliminary conclusions in this report are drawn from several days of cross-site analysis discussions among the researchers, which led directly to the cross-site displays included here. We should emphasize that data collection is still under way in all five sites, that the case studies are at varying stages of completeness, and that we expect to be both corrected and surprised as our remaining visits proceed.

Improvement Efforts in the Five Sites

Essentially, we looked for urban high schools where reasonably successful improvement efforts had been under way for several years, and which did not

seem to have depended on the arrival of a charismatic principal. We did not attempt "representativeness", but applied looser sampling criteria such as "If it works in New York, it will work anywhere."...and "Are the district and relevant external agencies actively interested in the study?"...and "Is the site within the region of an agency that is funding the study?"...and "Can we minimize travel costs?" (We are here following the recent dictum of Star and Strauss (1985): "Tell the truth about sampling, no matter how embarrassing.")

After many exploratory discussions and visits, we settled on schools in five locations: Boston, New York, New Jersey, Cleveland, and Los Angeles. Here is a brief overview of the schools (whose identity is protected by pseudonyms) and the improvement programs.

CHART 1 ABOUT HERE

Chart 1 provides a rapid overview; the reader can infer that we do indeed have a sample of schools with traditional inner-city student populations. All of them have a history of poor student achievement, and of difficulty and disruption. All have been working on improvement efforts for three years or more, though two have just launched their most recent effort this year.

We should note, however, that the improvement efforts always took place in a historical web of prior changes. The "program" never existed in monolithic majesty, as some school improvement literature implies.

In Agassiz, for example, there was a history of a "flexible campus" program and an intensive desegregation effort beginning in the 70's; the "new" principal who began in 1982 had been a principal and a vice-principal of the school two years earlier, with a close, supportive network of colleagues. The

Boston Compact "program" was simply an open-ended way to continue prior change efforts.

In Alameda, the SIP program began in 1978 as an umbrella support for assorted smaller improvement efforts, but change efforts only moved into high gear with the arrival of the new principal in 1980, who pushed first school climate and expectations improvement, then moved heavily into clinical supervision and an intensive mentoring program.

At Burroughs, the principal had been in place since 1979, began the Middle Grades Assessment program in 1981, then got planning funds in 1982 for an effective schools program that in successive years emphasized reading, math, discipline, then self-esteem---all this in parallel with her heavy push toward installing team teaching school-wide.

The Caruso picture also has a long history: a short business-school partnership, then intensive organization development work throughout most of the 70's, then neglect, and the arrival of a new principal in 1982, an effective schools program in 1983-84 that dwindled away, then the launch of an externally-initiated, heavily-funded comprehensive dropout prevention program in the summer of 1985. And a new state-mandated school improvement effort began in the spring of 1986!

Finally, Chester, a high school gradually rebuilt by a vigorous principal from the chaos of the late 60's, experienced a flow of hope-inducing but failing changes: a takeover by the state in 1980, an intensive school-wide planning and action program from 1981-83, the arrival of a new principal in 1982, and a climate improvement project (1982-83), both with little serious follow-through; a year's gap, then the externally-triggered launch of a comprehensive programmatic change effort covering everything from achievement through attendance, disruption and employment, along with a time-on-task

instructional improvement effort.

All this said to us that "the program" is only one piece in an intertwined braid of efforts to keep an urban high school moving, and to improve it, more or less ambitiously, and with more or less optimism and hope, based on what has gone on before.

Reasons for the Choice of Improvement Program

What reasons were in play at the time of decisions to proceed with these particular programs of school improvement? We had no a priori list of reasons, but pursued this question actively in our interviews with people in the schools, in district offices, and in key external organizations.

Chart 2 displays our findings, showing reasons present at these three levels. The ratings given represent the field worker's best synthesis of what he or she was told, directly or indirectly, about why the program had been initiated. Within each level (school, district, external), the reasons are arrayed in approximate order of "official merit", beginning with those most logically connected to school improvement, and ending with those with a largely symbolic or political nature. The sites in the display are ordered according to the approximate degree of impact of the improvement effort, as it later turned out: A1 and A2 showed the most change, B a moderate amount, and C1 and C2 relatively little---a factor accounted for in part by the earliness of program implementation, as noted above.

CHART 2 ABOUT HERE

What can we conclude from Chart 2? First, it seems clear that the fit of

the program with the school's general goals, and with particular school improvement agendas, are critical reasons for later success. For example, in Burroughs school, the principal seized the effective schools program as a way to push her agenda of converting the junior high school to a middle school structure. At Alameda, the SIP program was a good umbrella under which the principal could generate a strong staff development thrust, and shift faculty expectations upward.

We might also infer from Caruso and Chester that actively choosing a program, rather than having it mandated for the school, is a good predictor of later success. If we add to this the resource-getting motivation, the picture is clearly one of school pro-activeness. Improvement happens to those who seek it.

The picture at the district level is far less clear. The only factor that seems to predict eventual success (negatively) is resource-getting motivation (probably because resource acquisition by the district is no guarantee that schools will receive it). Still, there are plenty of DKs in this part of the table; we need to know more.

Turning to the external picture, again we see little clarity, except for the idea that choosing a program because it will leverage added resources for schools helps.

On balance, Chart 2 shows us that the main reasons for choosing an improvement program that predict eventual success are at the school level, not at the district or external levels.

Problems Encountered

Our conceptual framework assumed that high school improvement would never be problem-free. The issue is rather: how are problems dealt with? We wanted to

locate the problems encountered during the course of implementation, thence to follow the management and coping strategies used, and to see their consequences.

The field notes from the 5 sites contained allusions to a wide variety of problems, ranging from heart attacks in key figures to teacher resistance ("the program will tear this place apart.") and implacable organizational routines ("I have no control over teacher hiring. Last week we got some, I can only call them bag ladies.") The problems were often volunteered to us, as well as mentioned when we asked "How's it going?", and sometimes were clearly visible in meetings or documents.

We made a preliminary categorization of problems, as follows. They are arranged in approximate order of difficulty or intractability: problems typically harder to solve appear first. Illustrations of each are given.

Resources. People often complained about lack of time to carry out the program, along with feelings of overload. Less often, they mentioned lack of funds.

Physical setting/plant. A second, nearly as difficult, problem was limited or inappropriate space in which to carry out the program. At Caruso, for example, there was simply no office space for 9 new counselors funded by the program.

Low control, powerlessness. We often heard that program implementation was difficult because people in the school had little or no control over budget, over staff hiring/firing/turnover, or over key district policies. At Chester, the time-on-task program was simply mandated for all schools, and the high school could not oppose it directly, even though it was a poor fit to high school classroom practice.

Competing external demands. Another recurring problem was pressures or demands from outside the school that required time and energy that should have been devoted to program implementation. For example, at Agassiz, the staff has had to cope with a new district-originated curriculum, pressure to raise scores on the state achievement test, and a range of new district-imposed tests.

Unanticipated crises or events. As always, unexpected, out-of-routine events occurred in our sites, and required problem-solving action. At Caruso, the main coordinator for the improvement program suffered

a stroke just before implementation started; a heart attack felled a key vice-principal at Chester.

The items so far stem from the setting. Two additional problem types deal with the people involved:

Attitudes, sentiments. Many reported problems boiled down to people's feelings, attitudes, values, motivations. These ranged from direct resistance and skepticism to lack of hope ("We always start things, never finish them.") to the philosophical arguments Burroughs teachers had with their principal over the middle school concept.

Skill lacks. It became very clear that implementation was also hampered by the fact that teachers or administrators did not have the know-how that the change effort required. The Caruso cabinet apparently had no idea of how effective group decisions could be reached; the Agassiz leaders knew they were naive in planning processes; the Burroughs teachers had no prior experience in team teaching.

Finally, we saw several problem types that deal with the program being implemented.

Target population. In a few instances, characteristics of the group the program was aimed at stood in the way of implementation. For example, the "hard to reach" group of near drop-outs in Caruso High School proved, in fact, hard to reach. They rarely attended the special supportive classes set up for them, and few qualified for the special incentives (T-shirts, calculators) that had been set up to keep them in school. Similar problems were encountered in trying to involve parents at Burroughs.

Program content. In some cases, the content of the program itself made for difficulty. The time-on-task program at Chester ran into severe resistance from high school faculty who said it had no applicability to their daily work; the drop-out improvement efforts at Caruso ran into a "Catch 22": success with dropouts would make attendance figures worse, and vice versa. The various change projects at Agassiz were not fully understood by many teachers, and had conflicting goals as well.

Program process. Here we saw a wide range of problems, from uncoordinated effort (for example, confusion at Caruso over who would supply guidance services to which student groups) to delays (both unanticipated and deliberately staged), conflicts (many Burroughs teachers' opposition to team teaching, for example), and sheer lack of planning (for example, last-minute frenzy in locating Caruso students eligible for awards, when the ceremony had been scheduled for weeks.) As noted above, we considered this category of problems potentially the easiest to influence or solve.

Data on the frequency of these problems across our 5 sites -- and how they

were managed — appear be w; for now, we simply provide the list as an inductively derived summary of what our 5 sites encountered as they attempted implementation.

Managing and Coping Strategies

During our visits, we also wanted to find out how people dealt with the problems they encountered. As with the preceding topic, this sometimes meant direct questioning after a problem was mentioned ("And what's been happening about that?"...); more often, people mentioned coping efforts spontaneously, sometimes describing them first, then returning to the problem as the cause of a particular initiative. Observations and documents were also a good source.

Managing and coping strategies[3] turned out to be many-splendored phenomena. We were able, however, to produce an ordered set of categories, which are shown below. They range from relatively shallow, "soft", informal, and less-penetrating interventions to those which are deeper, more structurally-oriented, more deliberate, and more person-changing in their effects. The 23 strategies are clustered into 8 more-general stylistic answers to the basic question: what does one do when faced with a problem? As before, we give illustrations to provide meaning beyond abstract labels.

STYLE	STRATEGY
DO NOTHING	No coping. No coping or managing behavior is evident, in spite of recurring problem complaints, blaming, etc. Rarely, there may be a deliberate decision to do nothing.

---

[3] The term "strategies" is much more formal and deliberate than the actual behavior we found. In most cases, people simply did what they felt was needed, or would work, without a great deal of thoughtful anticipation. Still, we keep the label as a kind of after-the-fact summary of patterns of behavior that occurred in association with something seen as a "problem."

TEMPORIZE	Delay, avoidance. Putting off, procrastinating, postponing. At Chester, the time-on-task classroom observations were put off from January to March, then "later", as faculty grumbling and threats of union grievances grew.
DO IT THE USUAL WAY	Short-run coping. Improvising solutions, stopgaps, immediate specific actions that will address the problem. The Caruso coordinator's day is a whirlwind of phone calls, requests, soothings, mini-meetings, scribbled notes, hallway encounters, student mixups---all dealt with on the fly.
	Using existing meetings/roles. Giving the problem to some existing group or role. The Chester principal uses her regular meeting of vice-principals and department heads to monitor and plan the time-on-task program, but the climate is not open or direct.
	Action-taking, follow-through. Being sure that solutions proposed are carried out and followed up on. The new Caruso coordinator supplies regular "updates" on the status of each program component to the principal's cabinet and the program steering group. The Chester faculty were intensely frustrated when almost none of the proposals developed by task forces materialized in action.
	People-shuffling. Moving people around in jobs (for example, if person X has been doing a poor job of coping with the problem, moving X out and bring in Y, who it is hoped can cope better.) The weak coordination supplied by the Caruso program director led to the part-time entrance of a department head to the job, and eventually to his departure.
EASE OFF	Program modification. Changing the innovative program, usually to make it simpler, easier, less objectionable, smaller, etc. The difficult-to-schedule student mentoring program at Caruso was quietly dropped and replaced by two full-time tutors. The Burroughs principal backed off considerably from the time required for student advisory meetings when faculty resisted.
DO IT HARDER	Providing symbolic support/advocacy. Stressing the importance or value of the issue back of the problem, encouraging greater effort and dedication. At Agassiz, a Christmas staff dance and pancake breakfasts, a gigantic "back to school night", and plaques recognizing homeroom and individual attendance served such purposes.
	Providing rewards/incentives. Reinforcing good performance, or promising rewards ahead of time. The mini-grants available to Alameda teachers are an example, as are the external retreats and training events used at Agassiz. The Burroughs principal has rewarded teachers favorable to the program with visits to other schools.

Negotiating. Altering the rewards/cost balance by bargaining, compromising, making it more likely that people will want to "do it harder". Chester's principal gave up time she had wanted for faculty meetings when departments complained they had no time to do the detailed curriculum work the program required.

Pressuring. Exerting influence, demanding, or requiring people to do things needed to solve the problem. The Chester vice-principal, faced with arguments, simply insisted that the quarterly lesson plans be done her way.

BUILD PERSONAL CAPACITY

Training, developing people. Carrying out direct person-changing interventions (intensive skill training, coaching, practice, etc.) that go beyond sheer "information-giving". Examples include intensive workshops on self-esteem, motivation and goal-setting for Agassiz "managers", along with training in planning and supervision; Alameda's intensive staff development work, covering clinical supervision, assertiveness discipline training, time on task, and cooperative learning.

BUILD SYSTEM CAPACITY

Defining a new orchestration role/structure. Creating a coordinator, change manager, steering group, etc. with responsibility for dealing with change-generated problems. The Caruso program had a defined coordinator (and a supervisor) from its planning onward. The Agassiz program had 4.5 FTE's working on coordination. By contrast, no one has such a responsibility (except, nominally, the principal) at Chester.

Creating new interaction arenas. Setting up cross-role groups which bring together people with different perspectives on the problems of implementation. The SIP program at Alameda is steered by a school council of teachers, administrators, students and parents, each with equal votes and control over the improvement budget.

Vision-building/sharing. Articulating and making meaningful an image of where the program is going, what things will look like, and how we will get there. The Burroughs principal helped develop this both through a systematic middle-grades assessment program, and through visits to other schools. The Agassiz principal was able to communicate a vision of shared bottom-up planning toward some well-enunciated purposes. Alameda's principal said, " 'POOR' and 'DUMB' are not spelled the same way!", communicating a vision of high expectations.

Monitoring. Tracking carefully how well implementation efforts are going. The Caruso program supervisor developed a series of log sheets to record the services received by specific students, and pushed successfully for getting daily attendance reports computerized.

Rolling planning. Steadily planning, and revising plans based on the monitored success of ongoing efforts. This appears to

have occurred in Alameda's school council, and in the close working relationship between the Agassiz principal, his "kitchen cabinet", and the business representative assigned to the school.

Ongoing assistance. Using regular at-the-elbow help from outside the immediate setting to diagnose problems and support problem-solving efforts. The best example is the Agassiz business representative, who provided sustained, direct consultation, brokered intensive training events, and helped design the bottom-up planning process.

ADD NEW PEOPLE

Re-staffing. Moving substantial numbers of people in, out, or across jobs; goes beyond people-shuffling to make large changes in the mix of knowledge, attitudes and skills. The Burroughs principal systematically transferred teachers out who opposed her middle-school and team teaching ideas. Alameda's principal made a point of hiring "teachers that know", not just "teachers who care."

REDESIGN THE SYSTEM

Increasing resource control. Gaining power over the allocation of people, time, money to the school. Agassiz's principal has no formal control over hiring, but attends the "excess pool" meetings, unlike most other principals, and interviews teachers to encourage them to apply to Agassiz. He's also willing to "fight downtown", and chooses his battles carefully.

Empowering/team building. Giving more influence to roles or groups within the school. Agassiz's bottom-up planning is a clear example, as is the site council at Alameda.

Role redesign. Changing or restructuring people's responsibilities [as a strategy, not just as part of the innovative program]. The Agassiz program changed the responsibilities of department heads and teachers to include vigorous decentralized planning.

Organizational redesign. Changing organizational structures or procedures [as a strategy, not just as part of the innovative program.] Examples are the movement toward team teaching at Burroughs, along with the intensive student advisory groups; and the mentor-resource teacher teams at Alameda.

How often did these managing/coping strategies appear in our sites---along with the problems identified earlier? Chart 3 displays them. It was derived in a cross-site analysis meeting in which each researcher noted the problems and strategies present in his or her site. The chart's format places the main emphasis on the strategies. In many cases, we cannot be sure that the strategy

was aimed at resolving a specific problem---only that the strategy occurred in a site where the problem also occurred, and there appears to have been some connection.

The Chart 3 display is ordered: the problems are ordered from most to least tractable, and the strategies are ordered from shallowest to deepest. The cell entries also let us see something about the relative implementation success of our 5 sites; those marked A1 or A2 were more successful, the site marked B had moderate success, and those marked C1 and C2 were less successful.

CHART 3 ABOUT HERE

Some fairly clear conclusions can be drawn from Chart 3. First, it is quite apparent that most of the instances of "shallow" coping (none at all, temporizing, using "normal" routines) appear in the two less-successful sites, Caruso and Chester (C1 and C2). Coping at this level does not seem to lead to implementation success, at least in these two sites where implementation is still at an early stage.

Second, moving to the lower region of Chart 3, it is quite striking to note that the deeper managing and coping strategies (improving capacities of persons and the system, re-staffing, and role/organizational redesign) are used mostly by A-level (more-successful) sites. Except for the new orchestration structure and the monitoring strategy in C1, such strategies are mostly absent in the C-level sites. The B-level (moderately successful) site employs a few "deep" strategies, but less than the A-level sites.[4]

---

[4] We should also note that serious assistance was marked by its presence in the A and B-level sites, and nearly invisible in the C-level sites, another indication that improvement efforts must go beyond shallow coping if they are to make a difference.

The third remark is that A-level sites actually use a very wide range of strategies, except for "none" and "avoidance/delay". The feeling is one of actively doing whatever the problem seems to require, but having a repertoire that includes vigorous managing and capacity-building interventions where they are needed. It seems clear that both internal empowering and direct assertion of control over the external environment are important. Note too that A-level sites show "deeper" coping for the more-difficult problem of needed resources, where it is most needed.

The row labeled "action-taking" is an interesting one: it is included because people in both C-level sites repeatedly complained about action-taking failures. Yet it does not appear as a positive strategy for A and B-level sites. That may well be because follow-through is simply a taken-for-granted aspect of implementation work in such sites.

Managing/coping consequences. The comments above are based on the general success of implementation in the 5 sites. For further support of the idea that good implementation requires strong managing, capacity-building and system-changing efforts, we might look at the field researcher's views of what managing and coping efforts in their sites typically led to:

Agassiz (A1): Most problems have been acknowledged, addressed and solved.
Main consequence is an increase in individual and collective self-confidence (both teachers and students).
More downtown (central office) respect for school.

Alameda (B2): Reduced anxiety, built more constructive norms.
Better mesh with staff development, met teacher needs.
New roles and empowerment meant that principal could be reassigned.

Burroughs (B): Increased respect for principal's authority
Staff schism: people either big fans or opponents.
Little investment by new staff in program
As trained staff moved to other schools, new staff did not know or have skill in P2 program

Caruso (C1): Problems slightly ameliorated, but will recur.

Chester (C2): Moderate coordination of the curriculum alignment part of the program, but of the remainder not.
Problems will continue.

Program Implementation: Results

We have already sorted our sites according to their degree of successful implementation: we can comment briefly on what they seem to have achieved, as a way of pointing to the importance of good implementation of school improvement efforts.

Agassiz has changed in four years from a school with severe problems of attendance, disruption, and low achievement to a a school with active, orderly students whose achievement is moving up; its contract with the Boston Compact for annual 5% increases in attendance, retention, job and college placement is being met. Staff energy and morale are high.

Alameda has shifted over the last five years from a school with main emphasis on social control of disruptive behavior to a school with central emphasis on teaching. Attendance is up to 98%, and dropouts are down. Vandalism and gang activity are no longer problems. Reading scores have moved from the 16th to the 62d percentile. Alameda became a "model school" for the district, and was recognized in a national program.

At Burroughs, though faculty engagement in the improvement effort is only partial, the school is now the best junior high school in the district in terms of outcomes. Not all of this can be attributed to the program, however.

Students are clearly getting more attention from faculty. Their attendance is up, and disruptive incidents are down. Achievement scores have edged up steadily over these years. Parent involvement is uneven. At present the program is in a quasi-hold status, and the future is not wholly clear.

At Caruso, it is probably too early to tell. The residua of the earlier school improvement efforts were probably those of increased collegiality and a modest sense of progress, but morale remains uneven. After a year's work, attendance is up slightly; services delivered to the "at-risk" population of students seem to be working, but the impact on the school as a whole is not discernible.

At Chester, it is also too early to tell. The prior improvement efforts appear to have changed little, and left a residue of dashed hopes and cynicism. The work since 1984 has achieved a clear success in aligning the curriculum with present and forthcoming achievement tests, and perhaps in improving collegiality. But morale remains only moderate, and there is no evidence as yet that hoped-for outcomes of attendance, employment, retention and achievement are being achieved.

Concluding Reflections and Advice

These preliminary findings suggest a few themes:

1. Improving urban high schools does not occur so much through well-defined, artificially-defined "programs" as through a sort of braid: a time-linked mixture of thoughtfully-orchestrated efforts that respect the local context and history.

2. The change process, to result in anything like good implementation and following outcomes, requires active, coherent management, with a strong capacity-building emphasis. Typically, new structures and roles are required,

and strong efforts to develop both individual skill and organizational capability are needed. The task simply cannot be done in a "business as usual" mode.

3. A reasonable corollary of the capacity-development idea is that empowerment of people within the school, and increased power of the school within the district, are likely to accompany successful improvement efforts.

4. Though we sought schools that were not led by charismatic principals, and indeed had some doubts as to whether high school principals had enough legitimacy and clout to lead school improvement efforts, it seemed clear in our cases that an active, change-oriented principal can make quite a large difference in the success of implementation efforts.

5. Improving urban high schools through programs with an effective schools and/or effective teaching approach is indeed possible, and such schools are certainly not intractable.

At one point during our cross-site analysis meetings, we brainstormed a fast list of "advice" to those who would improve urban high schools. It is far too early in our analysis to make these definitive, but here are some selected examples:

--Start small, think big, with a plan.
--Think vision: of the school as it might be, of the change program; of how you'll get there.
--Think of yourself (or your surrogate) as a change manager.
--Get control of a change budget.
--A change program without orchestration is a change program that's going nowhere.
--Get all the assistance you can, all the way through.
--Don't assume that "concerns" mean resistance; don't assume they can't be dealt with.
--Expect to spend a lot of time in meetings.
--You probably don't know enough about planning and managing change. Get someone to teach you.
--The school as an organization is not a boundary: it's part of the problem.
--Groom your successors; mentor a change agent

--Share responsibility, and build others' power and responsibility.
--Remember that it's going to take a long, long time---and enjoy the trip as you go.

Such bits and pieces of advice are far from what people faced with improving high schools really need. But they point, we believe, in the right direction. As our final data collection and analysis continue, we expect to have a deeper grasp of what has made for greater or lesser success in urban high school improvement, and to generate some practical guidelines for implementation. We look forward to these next steps with pleasure.

REFERENCES

Berman, P., & Gjelten, T. (1984) Improving school improvement: an independent evaluation of the California school improvement program. Volume 2, Findings. Berkeley, CA: Berman, Weiler Associates.

Clark, D.L., Lotto, L.S. & Astuto, T.A. (1984) Effective schools and school improvement: a comparative analysis of two lines of inquiry. Educational Administration Quarterly, Summer issue.

Corcoran, T.B. (1985) Effective secondary schools. In R.M.J.Kyle (Ed.) Reaching for excellence: an effective schools sourcebook. Washington: U.S.Government Printing Office, for NIE Teaching and Instruction Division. Pp. 71-98.

Doyle, W. (1985) Effective secondary school classroom practices. In R.M.J.Kyle (Ed.) Reaching for excellence: an effective schools sourcebook. Washington: U.S.Government Printing Office, for NIE Teaching and Instruction Division. Pp.55-70.

Farrar, E., Miles, M.B., & Neufeld, B. (1983) A review of effective schools research: the message for secondary schools. Paper prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Cambridge, MA: Huron Institute.

Farrar, E., Neufeld, B., & Miles, M.B. (1983) Effective schools programs in high schools: social promotion or movement by merit? Phi Delta Kappan 65(10):701-706.

Firestone, W. A., Herriott, R.E., & Wilson, B.L. (1983) Explaining differences between elementary and secondary schools: individual, organizational and institutional perspectives. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Better Schools.

Huberman, A.M., & Miles, M.B. (1984) Innovation up close. New York: Plenum.

Louis, K.S., Rosenblum, S., & Molitor, J. (1981) Strategies for knowledge use and school improvement. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1984) Qualitative data analysis: a sourcebook of new methods. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Miles, M.B., & Kaufman, T. A directory of programs. (1985) In R.M.J.Kyle (Ed.) Reaching for excellence: an effective schools sourcebook. Washington: U.S.Government Printing Office, for NIE Teaching and Instruction Division. Pp.149-234.

Powell, A, Farrar, E., and Cohen, D. (1985) The shopping mall high school. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Purkey, S.C., Rutter, R.A., & Newmann, F.M. (in press) U.S. high school improvement programs: a profile from the High School and Beyond Supplemental Survey. Curriculum Inquiry.

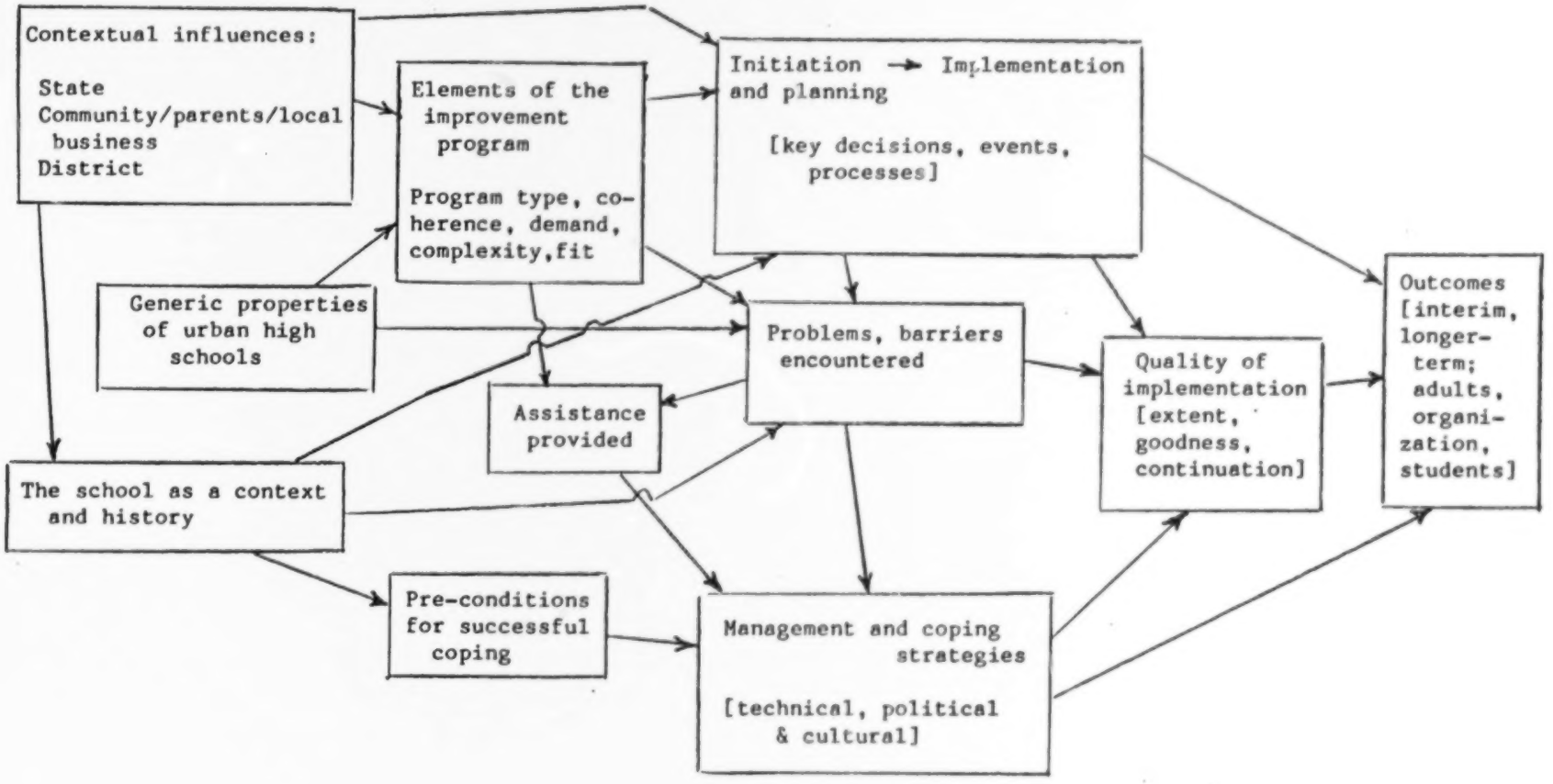
Rutherford, W.. Hord, S.M. et al (1985) Changing the American high school: descriptions and prescriptions. Paper read at 1985 AERA meetings. Part of Report No. 3216. Austin, TX: R&D Center for Teacher Education.

Star, S.L., & Strauss, A. (1985) Sampling in qualitative research. San Francisco: Tremont Research Institute.

3/86

IMPROVING THE URBAN HIGH SCHOOL: GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Conceptual Scheme


Contextual influences:
State
Community/parents/local business
District
Elements of the improvement program
Program type, coherence, demand, complexity, fit
Initiation → Implementation and planning
[key decisions, events, processes]
Generic properties of urban high schools
Problems, barriers encountered
Quality of implementation [extent, goodness, continuation]
Outcomes [interim, longer-term; adults, organization, students]
Assistance provided
The school as a context and history
Pre-conditions for successful coping
Management and coping strategies
[technical, political & cultural]

Handouts for Symposium on Improving the Urban High School. AERA meeting, San Francisco, April 19, 1986.

Chart 1: Case Study Sites and Improvement Programs

School	Location	Grades	Size	Population	Improvement Program
Agassiz	Boston, residential neighborhood	9-12	750	70% black 25% bilingual 31% special needs	Business-school collaboration (Boston Compact);school-based planning, evolving since 1982.
Alameda	Los Angeles, urban sprawl	9-12	2100	35% Hispanic 23% other minority	State school improvement program (SIP), plus heavy staff development; since 1978.
Burroughs	Cleveland, working class/ poor neighborhood	7-9	600	2/3 black 25% whites bussed in	Middle schools planning program (1981), then effective schools program (1982) and movement toward team teaching.
Caruso	New York, deteriorated poor neighborhood	9-12	2100	70% Hispanic 29% black 12% special needs	Comprehensive drop-out prevention program; since 1985. [Effective schools work since 1983.]
Chester	New Jersey, working-class neighborhood	10-12	2400	78% black 12% Hispanic 13% special needs	Comprehensive programmatic planning, plus effective teaching program, since 1985; [School-based planning and effective schools work 1981-83.]

Chart 2: Reasons for Choice of Improvement Program

REASONS	SITES Agassiz A1	Alameda A2	Burroughs B	Caruso C1	Chester C2
School-level					
General fit with school goals	High	High	High	Abs/Low	Absent
Use to achieve specific SI agenda	High	High	High	Mod	Absent
Prior success w. similar programs	Absent	DK	Absent	Low/mod	Low/mod
Mandated from outside the school	Low	Absent	Absent	Mod	High
Resource-getting	High	High	High	Mod	Absent
Careerism of principal or coords.	Absent	Absent	High	DK	Absent
District-level					
Fit with district SI goals	Mod	High	Absent	High	High
Fit with school-based planning assumptions	High	Mod	Absent	High	High
Prior success w. similar programs	High	DK	Absent	Mod (neg)	DK
Need for support from business	High	Absent	Low	Mod	Absent
Resource-getting	Low	DK	Mod	Mod/high	High
Concern about school image	Absent	High	Absent	Low	Mod
Supt's desire for visibility	Mod	DK	Absent	Mod	Mod
External	[business]	[SEA]	[foundation]	[SEA]	[SEA]
Fit with preferred goals and procedures	High	High	DK	Mod/high	High
Leveraging added resources for schools	Mod	Mod?	Absent	Lo/mod	Absent
Pre-existing networks of external people and the school	High	Absent	Absent	Absent	Absent
Presence of external advocates for the program	Absent	High	High	Absent	Mod
Externals concerned about community image	High	Absent	High	Absent	Low
Possibility of advancing self-interests of key external org.	Absent	DK	High	Absent	Mod

Chart 3: Managing/coping strategies, and problems, by site

Managing/coping strategies	Program process	Program content	Target pop.	Skill lacks	Atti-tudes	Crises	Competing demands	Low control	Physical setting	Resources
Can't determine	B	A2						C1		
None	C2			C1	C2			C2		
Delaying/avoiding		C1			C2					
Short-run coping	C1 C2	C1							C1	C1
Using existing mtgs/roles	A2 B C1 C2	C2								C1 A2
Action-taking	C1									
People-shuffling		C1?			A1	C1 C2				C1
Program modification		B	A1 B C1	B?	B		B			
Symbolic support					A1 C1 C2		A1			
Rewards/incentives					A1 A2 B C2					
Negotiating										C2
Pressuring/requiring					B C2					
Person-changing	A2		A1 A2 B?	A1						
New orchestration structure	A2 C1	C1		A2						A2 C1
New interaction arenas			B							
Vision-building/sharing		A1			A1 A2 B					
Monitoring		C1								
Rolling planning					A2					
Ongoing assistance			A1							A1
Re-staffing					A2 B					
Increasing control							A1	B?		A1?
Empowering	A1 A2 B?				A1 A2					
Role redesign										A1
Organization redesign										A1 A2

LEGEND: A1 Agassiz [more successful]
A2 Alameda
B Burroughs [moderately successful]
C1 Caruso
C2 Chester [less successful]